New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1949

Volume X, Number 24 • Rachel W. Coffin, *Editor* • Week of November 14, 1949

1949 PRODUCTIONS

Premiers in Other Years

Original Reviews Appeared In These Volumes

Stage Play	Page
1948 Vol.	
Anne of the Thousand Days	128
*As the Girls Go	159
Don't Listen, Ladies	100
Edward, My Son	214
*Goodbye, My Fancy	152
Inside U.S.A.	279
Jenny Kissed Me	112
*Kiss Me, Kate	91
*Lend an Ear	122
Life With Mother	182
Light Up the Sky	148
Love Life	201
*Madwoman of Chaillot (The)	104
Make Mine Manhattan	382
Make Way for Lucia	115
*Mister Roberts	338
My Romance	186
Oh, Mr. Meadowbrook!	108
Private Lives	209
Rape of Lucretia (The)	95
Red Gloves	132
Silver Whistle (The)	139
Small Wonder	244
Summer and Smoke	205
*Where's Charley?	197
Young and Fair (The)	143
1947 Vol.	
High Button Shoes	304
*Streetcar Named Desire (A)	249
1946 Vol.	
Annie Get Your Gun	382
*Born Yesterday	466
1944 Vol.	
Harvey	95

Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of November 14, 1949

1949 PRODUCTIONS

Premieres During 1949

Reviews Appear in This Volume

Stage Play	Page
All for Love	377
Along Fifth Avenue	392
Anybody Home	346
At War With the Army	336
Big Knife (The)	349
Biggest Thief in Town (The)	325
Blackouts	273
*Browning Version (The)	253
Cabalgata	284
*Death of a Salesman	358
*Detective Story	330
*Diamond Lil	369
Forward the Heart	374
Funzapoppin	288
Gayden	296
Happiest Years (The)	304
*Harlequinade (A)	253
H.M.S. Pinafore	247
*I Know My Love	33
Ivy Green (The)	316
Leaf and Bough	381
*Lost in the Stars	241
Love Me Long	228
Magnolia Alley	308
Mikado (The)	264
*Miss Liberty	280
Mr. Adam	292
Mrs. Gibbons' Boys	300
*Montserrat	244
My Name Is Aquilon	362
Night in Spain (A) (Cabalgata)	284
Pirates of Penzance (The)	257
*Regina	237
Richard III	365
Shop at Sly Corner (The)	386
Smile of the World (The)	396
*South Pacific	312
They Knew What They Wanted	354
*Touch and Go	250
Traitor (The)	322
Trial by Jury	247
Twelfth Night	267
Two Blind Mice	342
*Yes, M'Lord	261
CRITICS' CIRCLE AWARD	302

THEATRE OPENINGS

"Love Me Long"

Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of November 14, 1949

Theatre Critics' Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
NEW YORK POST HOME NEWS
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK MIRROR
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK SUN

All Reviews copyrighted by the newspapers and reproduced by permission.

Yearly Subscription $25.00

Published by CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS, INC., 235 East 22nd Street, New York 10, N. Y.

"Love Me Long"

New York World-Telegram

NOVEMBER 8, 1949

'Love Me Long' Much Like 'Private Lives'

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Though surely it has its occasional laughs, calling "Love Me Long" a comedy would seem less accurate than calling it a light domestic play. Here is a situation popular in light magazine fiction, which has been more verbalized than dramatized.

A quick if ruthless description of it is "Private Lives" without the jokes. Abby and Ike, formerly married and now with brand new prospects, meet in their old apartment which each tries to annex for himself and his fresh spouse.

They are gay, fractious and romantic in an impractical manner, and it is quite clear from the minute they meet again, that come what may, they will end up together.

• • •

It is just as clear that the new partners, Margaret and Jim, were meant for each other. In the first place they both make sense, which is likely to be a fatal bore in a play like this, especially if they talk about it much. Neither character has a modicum of humor, though Russel Hardie as Jim got the biggest laugh of the evening last night with his proud "I got a lighter."

It is hard to take Abby and Ike seriously when they amble off for a night together at a hotel, and return without the slightest abashment, expecting to be taken back by their new loves.

There is nothing objectionable about this play, or even anything particularly bad. But radio has about used up the audience for such fragile meandering domestic plots. Nowadays it simply is never very interesting.

• • •

Shirley Booth deserves high marks for gallantry, playing Abby for all she is worth, which is not a great deal. She never condescends to a role that has more parlor banter in it than it has smart humor.

George Keane tries to brighten Ike up with some slightly musical-comedy stalking, but Ike seems to be tone deaf as well as unpleasantly egotistic.

Anne Jackson, like the others, strikes a note then clings to it desperately and monotonously, but this is a result of the play's temper. She certainly keeps in the picture, while endowing a very dull young lady with breathless eagerness.

• • •

Russell Hardie plays Jim purely for well-bred sympathy, with the result that any comedy lines he has sound twice as funny as they actually are. This attitude is thus a welcome catalyst.

Harry Bannister is a confused landlord, while the surprise comedy comes from Daniel Reed's fantic inventor of games, and Heywood Hale Broun's comic idiom as a telephone man.

"LOVE ME LONG"

Comedy by Doris Frankel; staged by Brock Pemberton and Margaret Perry; setting by John Root; costumes supervised by Margaret Pemberton; presented by Mr. Pemberton at the 48th Street Theatre, November 7, 1949. The cast:

Abby Quinn.....Shirley Booth
Mr. Sharp.....Harry Bannister
Jim Kennedy....Russell Hardie
Moving Man.....Carl Low
Ike Skinner.....George Keane
Louise Ulmer..Jennifer Howard
Margaret Anderson.....
Anne Jackson
Phone Man..Heywood Hale Broun
Cleotus P. Anderson.....
Daniel Reed

Synopsis—Scene: The fourth-story apartment of a remodeled house in Sutton Place. Act I, Scene 1. A Saturday afternoon in the fall. Scene 2: A few hours later. Act II. Saturday night. Act III. Sunday morning.

The Sun

NOVEMBER 8, 1949

By WARD MOREHOUSE

One of the Worst.

Brock Pemberton, a showman of judgment, experience and success, and the producer of "Harvey," waited four years and now brings in the little piece of nothing at all called "Love Me Long," submitted last evening at the 48th Street Theater. It's pretty terrible.

Doris Frankel is the author. The writing in "Love Me Long" is self-conscious, the situations are trite, the characters are more than a little silly, and several players who have given good performances in the New York theater put in a futile evening upon the stage that once belonged to a tall and wonderful rabbit.

"Love Me Long" is all about recaptured love and a battle for the possession of an East River apartment. There are, you see, two couples. Abby Quinn, who seems to have been an actress, claims the flat and wants to live in it with Jim Kennedy, handy with mechanics. They are about to be married. But along comes Ike Skinner, a war correspondent, to whom Abby has been twice married. Ike now has romantic notions about a union with a bit of innocence named Margaret from Providence. She keeps pet mice.

Well, during the general commotion, Abby and Ike, finding that they still care, walk right out and spend an evening together at the St. Regis. Upon their return on a bright Sabbath, and in what passes for a third act, there are all sorts of decisions and adjustments. Abby and Ike were about to try it for a third time when the final curtain mercifully fell last night.

Shirley Booth, who has brightened numerous plays with her deft and incisive playing, has no material and no chance in "Love Me Long." George Keane, excellent in "Brigadoon"; Russell Hardie, Anne Jackson, and Daniel Reed, who made a character of the old fellow who liked the parks of the nation in "Hope Is the Thing With Feathers," are other principals in the odd goings-on in 48th Street.

It's all a little puzzling to find a producer of Brock Pemberton's standing going in for a comedy, and going on with a comedy, that is so embarrassingly inept. Our theater went right back last night to "Heads or Tails" and "The Odds on Mrs. Oakley."

NEW YORK
THEATRE CRITICS'
REVIEWS
An excellent solution to your gift problems! Let us send subscriptions, for you, to your friends. Each week upon receipt of the issue they will again appreciate your thoughtfulness.

New York Post
HOME NEWS
NOVEMBER 8, 1949

A Tedious Comedy About Dull People

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

There are wide-eyed optimists who tell us that the decrease in the number of new plays this season at least means that there should be a certain increase in their average quality. There was, however, no evidence of such an encouraging state of affairs at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre last night, where Brock Pemberton, who has been waiting patiently for a worthy successor to "Harvey," offered a comedy by Doris Frankel called "Love Me Long." It is just as unhappy a work as we used to see when producers and playwrights were more prolific.

That there are, at a liberal estimate, four or five moments of justifiable laughter in Miss Frankel's play, I would not want to deny. In general, though, it is a dull, familiar and lugubrious comedy which still hopes wistfully that it is possible to get a laugh by mentioning the Dodgers. It is the sort of antic which producers, suspecting that the critics will not like it, insist is an "audience play," thereby suggesting, I'm afraid, that they know more about critics than they do about audiences.

Shirley Booth

"Love Me Long" has one good head start in the direction of both critical and popular approval. It offers Shirley Booth in the leading role, and Miss Booth is a knowing and expert comedienne who can make some very dismal lines appear hilarious. But even Miss Booth can carry a vehicle only so far, and the author has put much too heavy a burden upon her. After about half an act, this excellent actress has done everything possible to make the evening gay, and no one can blame her for doing no more.

It would be a very dull playgoer who couldn't tell within fifteen minutes after the comedy opens just how it is going to turn out. There is never any doubt that the witty actress, played by Miss Booth, and the dashing journalist, enacted by George Keane, who have been married and divorced many times, are going to disown their ingenuous sweethearts and get married once again. The only trouble is that few are likely to care.

Hero and Heroine

There are innumerable weaknesses in the new play, and one of the greatest is that the presumably irresistible central characters are so dull. They are supposed to be terribly charming, witty, amusing and debonair, but that is merely what the author thinks. Actually, they are as tedious and trying a couple as the recent theatre has revealed, and, by comparison, the presumably stuffy young man and woman they jilt are marvels of charm and humor. But only by comparison, because they have their melancholy aspects, too.

With Miss Booth bogged down in her profitless role, the most engaging performance of the evening is contributed by Russell Hardie, who succeeds in making the heroine's discarded fiance a likeable figure. George Keane, who was so good in "Brigadoon," works too hard at being irresistible as the nominal hero, and Anne Jackson has but fair success as his discarded sweetheart. In minor roles, Heywood Hale Broun, son of a great father, and Daniel Reed have their amusing moments. But "Love Me Long" is no theatrical joy.

Journal American
NOVEMBER 8, 1949

Pemberton's Latest Disappoints Harvey

By ROBERT GARLAND

Brock Pemberton, producer of the comedy, is giving Doris Frankel, playwriter of the comedy, a better break than I, appraiser of the comedy, think she deserves. So, at the 48th Street, "Love Me Long," the comedy, ought to be more appreciative in return.

By and large, Brock Pemberton is doing more for "Love Me Long" than he did for "Harvey." Yet Mary Chase's comedy was not unappreciative. Not even on New York City Sundays and Abington weekdays when Mr. Pemberton, producer, was pretending to be Elwood P. Dowd.

Some drama critic who could could have been John Mason Brown wrote that "Harvey" was first produced as if it were a failure. No triple named drama critic can write the same about "Love Me Long." Nobody has let "Love Me Long" down. Nobody but its creator, Doris Frankel.

Even an excellent cast headed by Shirley Booth, George Keane, Russell Hardie and, especially, Anne Jackson; an excellent directorial job by Margaret Perry and Mr. Pemberton; an excellent setting by John Root; some excellent costumes supervised by Margaret Pemberton—

Even these do not make "Love Me Long" come through as an equally excellent comedy. Never so often, its lines are superior to their context. But not frequently enough for their context. Or for me!

* * *

Maybe Doris Frankel's creations are not bright in the first place. Maybe they never did have an actual third dimension. Maybe now, such third dimension as they do have, is supplied by the excellent cast under the two directors' excellent direction.

So when, in a surprisingly complicated story the small number of its characters is considered, the has-been and will-be marital mixup of Abby Quinn, Jim Kennedy, Margaret Anderson and Ike Skinner is never as reasonable as it could and should be.

It is about a beautiful fourth-story apartment in a modernized old house overlooking New York City's East River. One couple, as a couple, has lived catishly in it before. Another couple, as a couple, has moved in with the same idea. Two couples are, of course, a crowd.

Abetted, if not aided, by lighters by Ronson, liquor by Park and Tilford, record-players by Masque, fixtures by Duwico, bathtowels by Miller and modern furniture that should be, but is not, acknowledged, "Love Me Long" falls back more and more on its players.

And less and less on its playwright. Then, as a bright, brash or biting line occurs, it sounds as if it were provided by a producer who is wise or a player who is willing.

* * *

When, following his custom, Daniel Blum picks the most promising players of the season, I hope he lists Anne Jackson among them. **As Margaret Anderson, the less not-bright of the "Love Me Long" not-bright characters, she is the most excellent.**

Program notes remind me that I have seen Miss Jackson before, with the American Repertory Company, which was host with its own petar, as well as in "The Last Dance," "Summer and Smoke" and "Magnolia Alley." From now on, she is to be remembered.

Shirley Booth plays Abby Quinn as if she were preoccupied with Little Sheba on her mind. As male members of the now-we-are-married, now-we-are-not, quartet, George Keane pretends more casualness and Russell Hardie pretends more charm.

Harry Bannister, usually bumped-off near the play's beginning remains unnecessarily all through. He also is excellent, though, as are William Sharon as a moving man, Shirley Howard's Jennifer as a decorator and Heywood Brohn's Heywood as a phoneman.

In "Love Me Long," Brock Pemberton, the producer, gives Doris Frankel, the playwright, a better break than I, the drama critic, can, in print, applaud. Harvey, still invisible on the 48th Street's stage, agrees.